

Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE 2008 CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

In California in 2006, approximately 55 percent of women with incomes below the federal poverty level (FPL) who delivered a live infant reported that their pregnancy was unintended.¹ Slightly more than half of unintended pregnancies occur among women who were not using a contraceptive method when they conceived.² Contraceptive use is critical for couples to avoid unintended pregnancy, space births at healthy intervals, or postpone childbearing.

The Office of Family Planning within the California Department of Public Health participates in the annual California Women's Health Survey (CWHS) by funding questions related to reproductive status and current use of contraception. The goal of this report is to determine women's reproductive status and identify the types of contraceptive methods used. Respondents were asked about whether they were currently pregnant, seeking pregnancy, or had a hysterectomy; the number of sexual partners they had in the last 12 months; and their current use of birth control methods to prevent pregnancy. This analysis included 2,431 women ages 18 to 49 from the 2008 CWHS. Responses were weighted in these analyses by age and race/ethnicity to reflect the 2000 California adult female population.

The 2008 CWHS indicated that 15.8 percent of women refused to answer the question on current contraceptive use. The refusal rate was even higher (19.0 percent) among women at or below 200 percent of the FPL. Because of this high percentage

of refusals, this group was included as a subgroup in the analyses.

Overall, 11.2 percent of women were either pregnant (4.6 percent), seeking pregnancy (5.3 percent), or postpartum nursing (1.3 percent). Nearly one fifth of women were either infertile³ (9.5 percent) or had never had sex, had no current male sex partner, or had not had sex in the last 12 months (9.8 percent). Fourteen percent were fertile, not seeking pregnancy and sexually active but non-contraceptive users and were at risk of unintended pregnancy. More than one third of all women (39.7 percent) used contraceptives, including women who reported that either they or their partners were sterilized. In addition, 15.8 percent refused to answer the question on current contraceptive use.

Among users of contraceptives, the three most frequently reported methods were oral contraceptive pills (OCP; 26.2 percent), condoms (24.5), and vasectomy (14.2 percent). However, as shown below, contraceptive choices varied markedly by demographic characteristics. The global Chi-square test indicated that these differences were statistically significant.⁴

- For women younger than 30, OCP was the most common method of contraception (38.4 percent), followed by condoms (25.7 percent), and the intrauterine device (IUD; 14.2 percent). Women ages 30 to 39 reported condoms (29.0 percent), OCP (23.6 percent), and IUDs (14.8 percent) as their three most common methods. Among women ages 40 to

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Public Health Message:

The 2008 CWHS data showed that about 14 percent of women, while fertile, sexually active, and not seeking pregnancy, were not using any contraception and therefore at high risk of unintended pregnancy. Supporting access to reproductive health services and educating women on how different contraceptive methods can meet their reproductive needs are critical to reducing unintended pregnancy.

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49, the most common methods were vasectomy (32.4 percent), condoms (19.4 percent), and OCP (16.7 percent).

- Women born in the United States most frequently reported using OCP (27.3 percent), condoms (21.0 percent), and vasectomy (19.0 percent). A higher proportion of foreign-born women reported using condoms (32.7 percent) and a lower proportion reported using OCP and IUDs (23.6 percent and 14.1 percent, respectively).
- Among women who were currently married, the three leading contraceptive methods were condoms (24.3 percent), OCP (24.2 percent), and vasectomy (18.5 percent). For unmarried women, the three leading contraceptive methods were OCP (30.5 percent), condoms (26.2 percent), and IUDs (10.8 percent).
- A higher proportion of women with income above 200 percent of the FPL were contraceptive users (47.6 percent) compared to low-income women at or below this level (32.9 percent). See figure 1 showing the 2 pie charts.
- For women with incomes above 200 percent of the FPL, the three leading contraceptive methods were OCP (29.0 percent), condoms (22.2 percent), and vasectomy (20.9 percent). Among women at or below 200 percent of the FPL, the three leading contraceptive methods were condoms (28.8 percent), OCP (21.0 percent), and IUDs (15.4 percent).

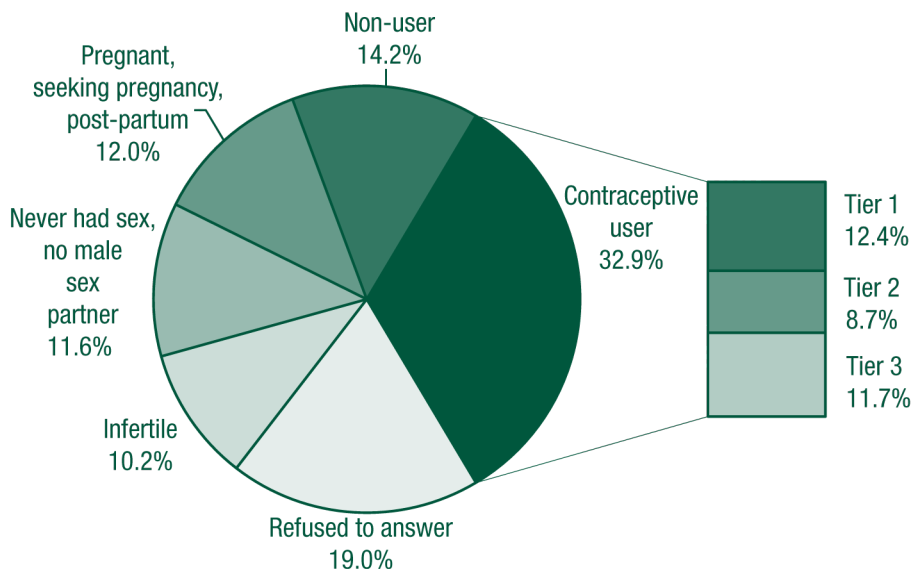
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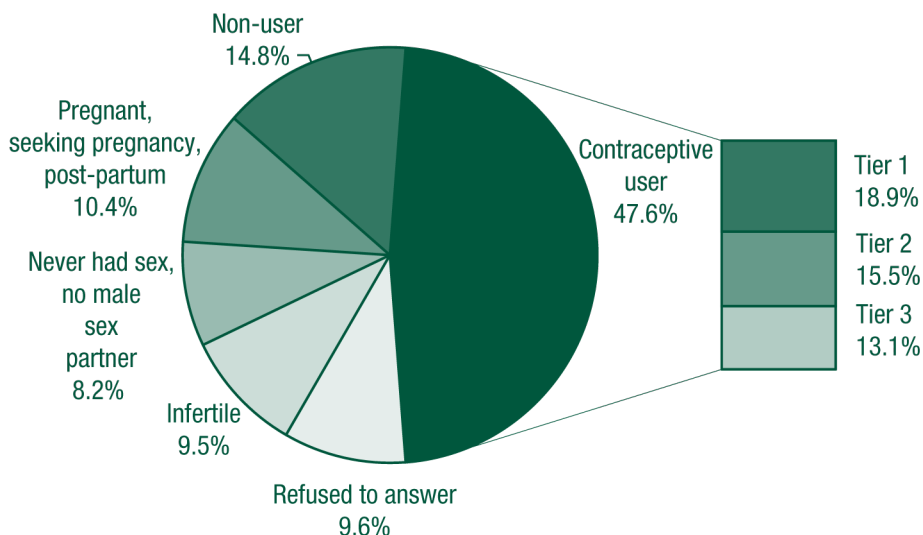
Figure 1

**Reproductive Status and Contraceptive Use Among
California Women Ages 18 to 49 by Income Status, 2008**

Women Ages 18 to 49 and At or Below 200% FPL



Women Ages 18 to 49 and Above 200% FPL



Note: Tier 1 – Includes long term methods such as sterilization, IUD, implant, and injectables.

Tier 2 – Includes hormonal methods such as pills, patch, and ring.

Tier 3 – Includes condoms and other low efficacy methods such as diaphragm, cream, withdrawal, natural family planning.

No respondent replied emergency contraception as her birth control method in the 2008 CWS.

Overall, 15.8 percent of women refused to answer the question on current contraceptive use. This percentage was even higher among women with income at or below 200 percent the FPL; therefore, this group was included as subgroup in the analyses.

Source: California Women's Health Survey, 2008

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- 1 California Department of Public Health. Statewide Tables from the 2006 Maternal and Infant Health Assessment (MIHA) Survey. Table A1. Pregnancy Intention. 2006. <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/data/surveys/Documents/MO-TableA1-PregnancyIntention.xls>. Accessed July 24, 2009.
- 2 Guttmacher Institute. In Brief: Improving Contraceptive Use in the United States. 2008.: <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/2008/05/09/ImprovingContraceptiveUse.pdf>. Accessed August 21, 2009.
- 3 Women who had a hysterectomy and women who answered “infertile” when asked their reasons for not using a birth control method
- 4 Chi-square, $P < .0001$

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